**The Medieval Period**

**(1066-1485)**

**Timeline:**

* Anglo-Saxons defeated by William the Conqueror of Normandy at Battle of Hastings
* 1170—murder of Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury
* 1215—Magna Carta signed by King John
* 1265—First Parliament
* 1296—wars between England and Scotland (until 1329)
* 1348—Black Death, series of plagues
* 1386—Geoffrey Chaucer writes *The Canterbury Tales*
* 1388—John Wycliff’s translation of Bible into English
* 1455—Beginning of the thirty-years, War of the Roses, civil war between House of York and House of Lancaster
* 1476—William Caxton establishes first printing press in England
* 1485—King Henry VII (of House of Tudor) begins reign

**Life:**

* The Normans (French) and the Anglo-Saxons blend into a truly English culture
* Feudalism—a European social, economic, and political system where land (which is the real wealth) was divided among noble overlords, or barons, then lesser lords (knights), then serfs and peasants
* The feudal manor (the home of the overlord and the lands around it) was self-sufficient—like a small city
* Social life was limited to hard work—farming and herding
* Amusement provided by the local church
* Chivalry—an ideal that all knights must try to attain: honorable, courteous, brave, skilled in battle, respectful to women, and helpful to the weak
* Crusades—military expeditions were undertaken to recapture the city of Jerusalem from the Moslems
* Latin was the language of the Church and was known to all educated people
* By 1200, London had 40,000 people and 120 churches
* Black Death—a deadly form of the bubonic plague killed one-third of the English population (1348-1349)
* Guilds—organizations not unlike modern trade unions were developed

**Literature**:

* Printing press (William Caxton) in 1476—brought about the written word to be more accessible to the populous
* *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
* *Morte d’Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory
* **Romance**, stories blending chivalry, love, magic, and marvels
* **Mystery (or miracle) plays**, the Church attempted to teach the illiterate the miracle stories
* **Morality plays**, where actors played the virtues and vices (patience, greed, etc.) within the heart of a single hero